



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MEXICAN MAFIA LIEUTENANT SENTENCED TODAY

U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton announced that Mexican Mafia lieutenant Johnny "Gira" Garcia-Esparza was sentenced earlier today to 60 years in federal prison for drug and firearms offenses related to the operations of the Mexican Mafia.

On April 20, 2005, a jury convicted Garcia-Esparza of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute a controlled substance, conspiracy to commit money laundering, four counts of possession with intent to distribute heroin and two counts of possession of a firearm during a drug trafficking crime.

"Mr. Garcia was a top leader in a vicious prison gang that deals in hardcore drugs, violent extortion and murder. The gangster life almost always leads to prison or the grave. Today, he learned this sad lesson for himself," stated United States Attorney Johnny Sutton.

Garcia-Esparza joins 24 other defendants in this case who received lengthy federal prison terms, including Mexican Mafia general, Jimmy "Panson" Zavala was sentenced to life imprisonment.

For five years beginning in August 1999, the defendants conspired with others to: 1) obtain large amounts of heroin and cocaine for further distribution and sale; 2) control the distribution of heroin and cocaine by restricting drug trafficking among non-Texas Mexican Mafia members to those who paid extortion fees or a "tax;" 3) protect "authorized" drug distributors from robbery, violence and competition; and, 4) use violence in all forms and degrees to enforce the Texas Mexican Mafia drug distribution "tax." During the time of the conspiracy, authorities estimate that the organization was responsible for distributing well over 150 kilograms of cocaine and well over 30 kilograms of heroin. During the investigation, authorities also seized approximately 80 firearms and approximately \$50,000 in cash.

This Organized Crime/Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) case resulted from a year-long investigation conducted by the Drug Enforcement Administration Task Force and the Bexar County Sheriff's Department with assistance from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The DEA Task Force is comprised of law enforcement officers from the San Antonio Regional Narcotics Task Force, San Antonio Police Department, Comal County Sheriff's Office, Guadalupe County Sheriff's Office, Kerr County Sheriff's Office, Kerrville Task Force, Leon Valley Police Department, New Braunfels Police Department, Schertz Police Department, Seguin Police Department and the Bexar County District Attorney's Office. Assistant United States Attorneys Joey Contreras and Joe Sepeda prosecuted this case on behalf of the Government.

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